

A REPORT ON PROGRESS

THE department continues to focus on enhancing productivity by automating many of our annual and daily functions. New and updated technology systems and software continue to dominate our environment and have assisted in reaching our goals of uniformity, reliability and correct assessment levels.



Jerry Crossler, Manager, Accounting Division

The Public Information Unit is customarily a taxpayer's first contact with the Department of Assessments. This unit provides general information regarding the yearly assessment process. This service

is provided through various means either in person at our Public Information Office, by telephone or response to written inquiries. The office provides self-service computer terminals where data can be accessed using various programs developed to assist the public. Also available to the public are various written reports regarding the yearly assessment of all properties in King County.

The primary responsibility of the unit is to assist and explain to the public the assessment process for real and personal property. The staff possesses a broad knowledge of the various Department functions such as mapping, abstract, home improvement and senior citizen exemptions. The staff also has a working knowledge of various related county, city and state offices. During the past year over 111,400 telephone inquiries were handled and approximately 61,000 individuals were assisted in our public area. Additionally, over 1,200 emails were handled.

Accounting Division

The Accounting Division has experienced some unusual drain on its knowledge base this year with the retirement of two very key employees. Everyone within the division increased their participation in the work functions to keep the level of performance of the division at the highest level possible.

Migrating off a mainframe system that is all in-house developed, and dates back to the 1960s and 1970s will continue to be one of the major issues facing our department in the next few years.

Many applications have been developed over the years to support the appraisal, analysis, and appeals functions of the office. This year the listing, exemptions and levy functions (the functions of the Accounting Division) will have applications developed to support their functions. This will mean the people who work segregations and senior and other exemptions will be able to get rid of the very old-fashioned forms and batch data entry methods they use now. Certifying of the tax roll is still mainframe-based, but a lot of the work (levy limit calculations and levy rate calculations) uses Windows programs on PCs and downloaded mainframe data.

Implementing Technology Enhancements

The Information Service Division (IS) is responsible for developing and supporting systems that the appraisers use to value property. Appraisers have the need to take information out to the field, update that information, and securely return the data back to the server. The technology behind the current checkout system has become obsolete and very difficult to support. We have been working very hard to modernize this system. When the new system rolls out, we will have simplified the process of checking out and checking in data by removing three steps out of the process.

There has been a high demand from the public to search for comparable sales. We are developing a Comparable Sales application due to be released late in 2001. It will be available on the self-help computers in our Public Information area.

We are also pursuing the possibility of electronic affidavit filing. The benefits of such a system is enormous.

We are constantly enhancing our systems to provide the highest level of service to our users and ultimately to the public. We are continuing our efforts to lower costs and increase efficiency by working with other government agencies to exchange data electronically.



Kids at Work Day

Residential Division

Product quality, time management, training, customer service and production are the on-going focus of the Residential Division. Team meetings and Division discussions provide an opportunity for creative problem solving. The Residential Division is responsible for valuing 480,000+ parcels. The 2000 Residential roll was completed with timeliness and quality.

Further integration of King View, the Assessor's GIS program, advanced valuation modeling and Excel training will be the focus for the coming cycle. A continued evolution of the Assessor's Characteristic Adjustment methodology is occurring providing the further involvement of appraisal staff in the annual update process.

Commercial/Business Division

We have instituted various new computer applications in the Commercial/Business Division in 2001. Moving from an "old technology" mainframe system to a "more current" client-server environment has allowed our appraisers greater flexibility and many additional valuation tools to improve quality and uniformity of property valuation.

In both the Real and Personal Property Sections, we have expanded the information available to taxpayers via the Internet to promote better customer service and be more cost effective.



The Personal Property Section is, for the first time in King County history, preparing to send and receive affidavits electronically. This will save taxpayers time and money and allow staff to process information more efficiently. The Personal Property Section, working with the Washington State Department of Revenue, has successfully implemented a new business program. This program along with our expanding auditing program has improved uniformity in personal property assessment.

Special thanks to Scott Noble, King County Assessor and former Deputy Assessor, Bob Roegner, for their help in preparing this report.

The Division continues to train appraisal staff in the use and understanding of USPSP and it's application to mass appraisal. Appraisal Reports are prepared for all geographic areas as well as specialty properties including investment grade offices, warehouse business parks, apartments, and major retail. Income modeling continues to be successfully used in the valuation of these income-producing properties.



Scott Noble and New Appraisers



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